



# County Corner

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## Flathead County Superintendent of Schools

An old cliché might be applicable in defining the office of the Flathead County Superintendent of Schools, “A Jack of all trades . . . .” However, the second half of the cliché, “and a master of none” does NOT apply! A staff of four dedicated workers brings together areas of expertise that allow the office to perform the array of administrative responsibilities required by federal, state, and local laws. The office assists school districts in understanding, implementing, and maintaining current law while exercising careful stewardship of taxpayers’ money.

Joined by her well-experienced staff of Clay Cloud, Mary Juntunen, and Susanne O’Connor, Superintendent Sheffels serves the 23 school districts of Flathead County, the students, the educators, and the taxpayers. The public schools currently have approximately 8,853 elementary students and 4,456 high school students.

The office oversees the budget preparation process for schools. This includes providing estimates of district general fund budget caps and district transportation fund revenue, calculating county retirement and county transportation mills, and compiling all for inclusion on tax notices. It reviews and approves specified state disbursements to school districts. It oversees school elections and administers oaths of office. All teachers and administrators register their certificates with the superintendent’s office and schools are informed of the status of the teacher’s credentials. The office fingerprints and conducts background checks for new rural school employees and substitutes. All schools are provided substitute lists.

The Superintendent’s office is a central source of information and a distribution center. It is responsible for providing the public certain information with regards to public, private, and home schooling. Official acts must be on record—school district organization, abandonment, nominating districts, and Board meeting minutes. Records for preservation include attendance agreements, student enrollment, annual data collection, transportation contracts, election data (trustee, mill levy, and bond), final budgets, trustee annual

reports, school district audits, home school notification, and prescribed student files.

The Superintendent serves as a hearing officer for school controversies. She is the chairperson of the County Transportation Committee that reviews individual transportation contracts, sets bus routes, certifies bus drivers and monitors bus inspections. (Flathead has approximately 160 bus routes.) The county superintendent is the attendance officer for some districts under prescribed conditions and pursues truancies. As a liaison she visits schools and serves on community boards and committees to keep communication flowing between schools and taxpayers. The office is an important link in county-wide emergency services.

The county superintendent’s office provides the framework for and serves as the prime fiscal agent for cooperatives—one bringing needed insurance coverage to rural school teachers, another providing special education services and yet another providing curriculum building and professional growth opportunities. The office classifies school districts according to size, reviews school boundaries, and processes “isolation” applications.

The county superintendent of schools is elected by the public for a



**Marcia Sheffels, County Superintendent and Gerald Byrd, long-time bus owner and contractor for Flathead’s longest bus route.**

four-year term. The individual is required to be a certified teacher with at least three years of teaching experience. The office holder remains an active member of the Teachers’ Retirement System. The current superintendent, Marcia Sheffels, holds a BA & MA with teaching certification and has served in the education field for 37 years. A driving force for her has been the belief that all children deserve a future and the country deserves a well-educated, conscientious citizenry. Personal inspiration and continued education come from her children and step children. Ms. Sheffels is proud to be associated with Flathead’s excellent educational community and is appreciative of taxpayer support, as well as being sensitive to their concerns.



**The experienced staff at the Flathead County Superintendent of Schools office consists of Clay Cloud, Mary Juntunen, and Susanne O’Connor.**

*“The needs of the future take precedence over the demands of the present.”*

— County Commissioners: Joe Brenneman, Gary Hall and Dale Lauman